

**Web Celebrities in the Age of Social Media: Fashion Bloggers & the
Creation of their Personal Brands**

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

Remington Huth

Thesis Advisor

Scott A. Inks, Ph.D

**Director, H.H. Gregg Center for Professional Selling
Associate Professor of Marketing**

Advisor's Signature:

Signed

**Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana**

May 2016

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2016

Sp Coll
Undergrad
Thesis
LP
2489
.24
2016
.H88

Abstract

Social media has become a very important aspect of marketing in the fashion industry, and fashion bloggers are leading this evolution. Fashion bloggers have developed massive followings by creating personal brands portrayed through social media outlets and their personal blogs. These individuals have become massive influencers and opinion leaders within the industry. For my thesis I will study this trend at large. Additionally, an analysis of four prominent fashion bloggers, Sarah Vickers, Julia Engel, Caitlin Covington, and Olivia Rink is provided. Finally, to put everything I learn into practice I completed a creative project consisting of the conception of a fashion blog.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Scott Inks for his advising me through this project. I would like to thank my parents for their encouragement and for funding the purchases that resulted from hours spent reading fashion blogger posts and product recommendations. Finally, I would like to thank Raegan for acting as my model and inspiration through the formation of my fashion blog.

Author's Statement

A large portion of my thesis consists of the blog I developed as the creative portion of my project. Throughout college I studied textbooks and lectures that taught the basics of marketing, branding, and social media use. I then took that knowledge and expanded on it through exhaustive research on the fashion blogger community. I studied real life applications of these practices within my research of specific fashion and lifestyle bloggers. However, studying and looking at other sources only does so much. To further apply my learnings, I created my own fashion blog to accompany my thesis. This creative project allowed me to develop practical skills needed to design and operate a fashion blog. Thus, allowing me to understand more fully this popular, yet effective marketing strategy. Running the blog taught me lessons on management, fashion styling, photography, dedication, and broadened my overall takeaway.

The Relevance of Fashion Blogging

The world of fashion marketing is constantly evolving because of external influences and the need to keep up with changing consumer demands and preferences. The most recent influence to shape the industry are advancements in technology and the widespread use of the internet and social media. The rise in popularity of the internet and social media outlets has created a new platform that allows fashion brands access to a huge number of potential customers through a means with low barriers to entry. Social media marketing allows brands to advertise to consumers in their everyday lives and it allows society at large to keep up to date with their favorite brands and trends more easily than ever before. This means of content distribution has led to social media becoming “an everlasting runway, that changes players, shareholders, reputation, and creativity” of brands within the fashion industry (Francois).

This social media trend has also led to the creation of a new kind of celebrity within the fashion industry, fashion bloggers. These bloggers are everyday people who express their opinions and personal styles online and develop followings by doing so. These individuals create brands through their blogs and social media accounts by posting content of what they wear, how they put outfits together, and how they incorporate fashion and beauty into their everyday lives. The popularity of bloggers is changing the way consumers stay updated on trends in the fashion industry. Recent studies have depicted that on social media platforms such as Instagram, these web-celebrities have audiences larger than those of traditional online magazines (Jones). However, successful bloggers are more than just social media celebrities. These individuals have created “a new breed of entrepreneur;

where a simple love of fashion can be flipped into a business" (Raye). CNN even reported in recent years that some fashion bloggers who have successfully turned their hobby into a full-time job are generating six-figure incomes annually solely through running their blogs (Godso). This income comes from fashion brands willing to hire bloggers to act as brand ambassadors, partners in creating new lines, or endorsers of the brand through social media content or live appearances. They appeal to brands because, in contrast to typical celebrity endorsers, a social media blogger is a "celebrity spokesperson who already has her own distribution channel" (Griffith).

The Appeal of Fashion Bloggers

Fashion bloggers develop followings through their online personas, consistent content, and overall relatability. These women bloggers provide an appeal that is not offered through runway shows or high-fashion magazines because they have a higher level of relatability. This draw comes from the fact that bloggers are seen as "credible because they are one of us, they aren't top models, but girl-next-door types that are trustworthy" (Bilkova). They are real people with ordinary lives and incomes who hold highly respected opinions. The strength of these opinions can be illustrated by the fact that "41% of consumers say that blogs are among the top three sources that influence their purchase decision, beating out brands' official Web sites and magazines" (Jones). The reason they hold more influence than magazines or brands themselves is because of the intimacy bloggers develop with their followers. Social media platforms allow a blogger to post consistent content to be seen by followers from their smart phones anywhere and at any time of the day. In using this channel, bloggers also have the ability to respond to and

connect with followers easily and quickly. As users browse their feeds, they see pictures and posts from bloggers between those posted by the friends and families they follow. This integration of bloggers and everyday friends and acquaintances creates an ability to feel connected that cannot be replicated through traditional marketing means. This intimacy builds trust and confidence between potential consumers and bloggers and makes the blogger's opinion even more influential in the minds of their followers.

Social media famous bloggers further their appeal by portraying honesty and openness in their blogs. Society admires traditional beauty every day in magazines and on television. Bloggers provide something more than their beautiful, finished looks, by incorporating what it took to get there. Bloggers provide information on where and when they get their clothes, shoes, and accessories. They give insight into beauty routines and favorite products, and even provide tutorials to give followers the chance to style themselves similarly from home. These video or picture tutorials teach hair or makeup routines and make the bloggers seem more authentic by illustrating that what they look like was worked for and perfected without the help of a professional stylist or beautician. Followers are drawn to this openness because advice is most meaningful when taken from someone liked or admired, and it is far easier to admire and connect to these realistic representations of beauty than the typical stone-faced supermodel. These tutorials and real life appliances of fashion also create calls to action that are easy to follow because of blogger attempts to make their lives and styles imitable for the average person.

Immensity of the Blogging Realm

One notable problem I encountered when attempting to study these fashion bloggers who have helped lead social media marketing in a new direction is the endless variety and differences between blogger offerings. Originally, I planned to study the most successful, most followed, and established bloggers in order to draw inspiration for my own fashion blog. However, when I started to look through the pages of these ultra-successful bloggers, I discovered some challenges that would make direct comparison problematic. First, some of these high fashion bloggers have senses of style extremely different from my own. I did not grow up on the streets of New York and I have never dressed or wanted to dress like a high fashion runway model. These looks wouldn't fit into the lifestyle I live, so although inspiring, these bloggers were too different from me to be adequate sources of inspiration. Second, some of the most popular fashion bloggers live life styles to which I cannot relate. People follow their lives because they are exciting and beautiful, not because they are practical for the average person. Third, a trend I noticed among some of the most popular bloggers is their love of travel. Although it's entertaining to follow their luxurious and frequent vacations, it would be difficult to model my own page after these pages when I don't have trips to Europe or Bora Bora planned into my upcoming semester.

There are countless fashion bloggers that portray countless different styles. I faced another problem when deciding who to study because I wanted a wide array of people and did not initially know how to pick my mix. I narrowed my list to those with more relatable lifestyle, and again ran into difficulties when the many differences between bloggers made comparisons difficult. I wanted to learn how they became successful by comparing features

and characteristics of their different pages, but conclusions would be hard to draw if the pool of bloggers being studied was too broad. I thought of it like any industry that markets to the public. In the clothing industry for example; it is difficult to compare the marketing tactics of Old Navy with those of Burberry because they market towards entirely different target markets. So when picking the bloggers I wanted to study, I first considered the target market I wanted to reach with my blog, and then looked into bloggers who marketed to the same or very similar markets.

I want to blog with my own personal style, because it is the most feasible and because I already understand it. Because of this, I need to target individuals with similar tastes because they will be the most interested in my endeavors. Accordingly, my target market consists of females who are between 18 and 30 years old, interested in fashion and beauty, middle class, active on social media, and are brand conscious. They aim to always be put together and put a great deal of thought into their outfits and the way they present themselves. Their styles are best described as girly and preppy. They portray classic American prep rather than runway trends. They style themselves femininely and put as much thought into accessories, makeup, and hair as they do their actual outfit. These women are fond of brands such as Ralph Lauren, J. Crew, and Kate Spade.

Using these criteria, I picked the four fashion bloggers that I would follow and analyze while completing my thesis. The first is Sarah Vickers. I chose to study this blogger because she is who initially drew me into the world of fashion blogging. She has created a personal brand that is distinct and strong, and she is a true fashion blogger in her offerings because of the narrow focus and restricted content of her blog. Her content stays focused on fashion and how she incorporates it into her life. Julia Engel is the next blogger I chose

to study. She was chosen because of the success of her blog and her ability to turn it into a full-time job. I also chose to study Caitlin Covington because of her relevance in the blogging industry and her preppy, girly style that is in line with what I want to portray. The final blogger analyzed is Olivia Rink, who was chosen for slightly different reasons. Rink is slightly less popular than the other bloggers because she is still in the process of establishing herself and creating her brand. However, I found her a relevant blogger because of her high level of relatability and quick growing popularity. Olivia Rink is from a small town in Indiana, a recent college grad, and is highly relatable because her posts draw from experience and realistic happenings of her twenty-something life. These bloggers vary slightly in their specific offerings and personalities, but represent similar styles and serve similar target markets. After the analysis of these bloggers, I will provide the underlying characteristics and tactics that I have examined that will aid in the creation of my own fashion blog.

Sarah Vickers (@sarahkjp) — *Classy Girls Wear Pearls*



Blogger History & Blog Origin

Sarah Vickers is a fashion blogger living in New England and the creator of, Classy Girls Wear Pearls. She has more ties to the fashion industry than the average blogger because her husband is a designer and together they created the coastal brand, KJP. The couple has been together since the formation of the brand and Sarah Vickers has played a part in the creation and marketing of the brand since its conception. KJP is a nautical themed brand that started selling accessories, most commonly braided rope bracelets, notable by their signature anchor logo. The couple started this process out of their own home, boiling dyes and braiding the bracelets themselves. They now sell nautical themed clothing, ties, purses, and other accessories, and a line of pearls created by Sarah Vickers herself. While the brand has continued to grow and expand, so has Ms. Vickers' personal brand as a fashion blogger. She started her blog as a hobby, and to channel her love for fashion and life. Her social media accounts, as well as her personal blog, Classy Girls Wear Pearls, work together to portray the personal brand of Sarah Vickers, as well as chronicle her everyday life and her ever present love for a preppy wardrobe.

Blog Title & Social Media Handles

Her social media handles represent the brand she's created with her husband, Kiel James Patrick. His personal brand is named, KJP. Sarah is a big part of the marketing for his brand, just as he is a large part of her personal brand. This connection is established in her Instagram handle, @sarahkjp. The blog Sarah Vickers runs is entitled, Classy Girls Wear Pearls. This name was created prior to the creation of the pearl line that Vickers designed for KJP. The name is a representation of Sarah Vickers' personal style, brand, and the life she lives in general. This motto also summons connotations that Vickers wishes to be

associated with. The phrase "Classy Girl" brings to mind the image of a woman who is stylish and sophisticated, which fits Sarah Vickers to a tee. Pearls in the jewelry world come with a connotation of sophistication. They are timeless and have come to be known as the accessory to best compliment any preppy wardrobe. Pearls are a pricy accessory, so including this reference in the title also leads to the assumption that Vickers lives a certain lifestyle. Overall, the blog name presents a classification for girls who wear pearls, which Vickers fits by definition and because of her tendency to accessorize with pearls.

Instagram Activity

The images Vickers posts on Instagram are wide in scope as this social media outlet is used frequently because of its convenient and quick-paced nature. Sarah Vickers posts daily, sometimes two or three times. This frequency means she shows up on her follower's feeds consistently. She posts so frequently that it is easy for her followers to feel as if they are a part of her everyday life. This is an important part of her social media marketing because it makes followers feel close to her life as it is happening. When they know what she is doing, who she is with, what she is wearing, and even what she is eating on occasion, it helps create a level of intimacy that she otherwise would not have with fans and followers that will never meet her in real life. This intimacy creates loyalty in Vickers' followers. Her posts are of her real life and full of the loved ones with whom she surrounds herself. This causes followers, who see Sarah and her husband while scrolling between their friends and family members, to think of Sarah as an everyday person who frequents their newsfeed. The result is that she can be thought of as almost a friend or acquaintance rather than simply a social media celebrity.

Blog Offerings

The types of pictures Sarah Vickers posts on her Instagram account are similar to those she posts on her blog, the difference being that her blog is more detailed. For example, when Vickers attends an event, she may post one or two photos of the event on her Instagram. These pictures often act as a preview of her blog posts, *Classy Girls Wear Pearls*, where she posts multiple photos from the same event. Her blog posts consist of mostly images, normally between 15 and 20 per post. The pictures tell a short story, similarly to the way many bloggers tell the story of an event through words. The images will chronicle a short time period, sometimes a day, sometimes just one dinner. The pictures show off Sarah's outfit, which is typically explained in more detail at the end of the post so that followers can find out where everything can be purchased. Her blog differs from a lot of fashion bloggers because she posts images that portray her life rather than just her outfits. She has created a lifestyle blog as much as a fashion blog by posting no more than pictures and brief descriptions. Her lack of wordy posts leaves attention right where she planned for it to be, on the fashion itself and how she incorporates it into her everyday life.

Overall Style

Her page has a very distinct style that mirrors the life she lives. Her personal style is best described as preppy and she portrays this through every aspect of her pictures. Her look is all-American. Sarah has features that give her classic beauty. She has an ever present smile that makes her page inviting and positive. Her classic look is accompanied by her classic wardrobe. Sarah Vickers wears timeless pieces that are styled to fit her personal look. She wears patterns such as gingham, polka dots, and lots of plaid. She dons staple

preppy brands such as Ralph Lauren, Lilly Pulitzer, and J. Crew. What sets her apart is the way she uses her wardrobe to style herself so that she comes across as flawlessly polished and elegant, regardless of whether she is at a dinner party or just at work. Sarah Vickers overall style can be best described as timeless, American, and more so than anything else, preppy.

Defining Feature

Her defining feature that makes her stick out, that draws people in and makes them envious, and that differentiates her from the average fashion blog is her relationship with her husband. Her husband, Kiel, whose name is pronounced like “Kyle” with altered spelling for marketing purposes, is constantly featured on her page and the depiction of their relationship can only be described as fairy-tale-like. He is a fashion designer and fashion blogger as well, so he markets himself just as exceptionally and this shared interest works to her advantage. Every picture of them looks like it could be an advertisement, completed with a personalized caption that makes it even more captivating. His incorporation draws people in and adds to the closeness Vickers’ followers feel they have with her. She is not sharing her clothes and style advice alone, but this important and personal part of her life. Kiel comes across in Vickers’ pictures just as often as any accessory and makes her stand out in the blogging world because of the preppy perfection the two of them have jointly created.

Julia Engel (@julahengel) — *Gal Meets Glam*



Blogger History & Blog Origin

Julia Engel is the creator of a successful fashion blog entitled, Gal Meets Glam. The blog has been up since 2011 when Julia started it during her junior year in college. She started with no expectations. Engel knew little about blogs or the online blogging world, she simply decided she wanted to create something and Gal Meets Glam is what resulted from that desire. She finished college and earned a degree in Marketing and then started working in San Francisco, but continued running her fashion blog on the side. A year later, in 2013, Engel decided to quit her job and start blogging full time. Since then, Gal Meets Glam has continued to grow, along with the number of followers Engel reaches. Engel runs the blog, with the help of her husband who acts as photographer, and does so as a full-time job. She earns revenue through her use of sponsored content and affiliates. She picks and chooses sponsors and does so with high criteria, so that everything she promotes and advertises for represent her true opinion and taste, and not opinions she is paid to have. Regardless, Engel always makes it known if she is being paid for a specific blog post. The second way she earns a profit is by providing links to certain products or clothing pieces on her website. Her affiliate items appear on her posts and are available to browse on her blog, and Engel receives incentive every time someone clicks through or purchases items through her Gal Meets Glam blog.

Blog Title & Social Media Handles

Engel's blog name reflects her overall goal, which is to "encourage people to add a little glam to their everyday life" (Engel). Her blog is full of glamorous inspiration that portrays everything from wardrobe choices to household decorations. The word "gal" is used in everyday life to describe an average female, while "glam" or "glamour" is not

necessarily thought to be something found in everyday life. Engel combines these words to reference the beauty that can be incorporated into everyday routine if one has the energy to do so. She highlights on her blog the different ways she makes everyday life beautiful or exciting and in doing so encourages those who witness to do the same. Her Instagram handle is more straightforward. It is simply her name, with reference to the blog she runs included in the pages personal description section.

Instagram Activity

Julia Engel's Instagram account is updated between 1 and 3 times per day. She uploads pictures of her outfits or specific pieces from her closet frequently. Her page is also full of lifestyle pictures that highlight where she is and what she is doing. She posts a great deal of photos of nature and scenic surroundings. Pictures can also be found of beautiful aspects of her life. There are sometimes photos of colorful, lively floral bouquets, and other times photos of beautifully arranged dessert trays or especially lovely breakfast foods. The pictures represent her style and the glamorous places or items around her that influence and inspire that style.

Blog Offerings

Pictures posted on her Instagram account often reference more detailed blog posts and point followers in that direction in order for them to find out more. Her blog, Gal Meets Glam never disappoints in its presentation of everything she promises and more. Engel is constantly creating new content for her blog and has built success because there is always something new to browse, whether it is a product reference or a new album displaying a recent travel expedition. Her blog is split into five main categories. The first section holds

fashion inspiration. Here Engel posts about outfits she wears and details where they are from. The posts usually contain between 15 and 20 photos and display one specific outfit worn throughout the duration of a day. The pictures are taken by her husband who is a professional photographer so they are always high quality and well shot. Another section of her blog is dedicated to beauty. Here, followers read about products that Engel uses to care for her skin, or keep her hair healthy, or simply uses in daily makeup routines. The products are mentioned and often accompanied by step-by-step tutorials complete with pictures. A third section highlights home décor and the ways Engel incorporates her personal style into decorating her apartment. Another section is dedicated solely to travel. Engel travels often and documents everywhere she goes with photos. Her followers are able to experience her travels via the images she provides and then read about the specific places she stayed at or visited while traveling. The last section of her blog is not for more unique content, but is instead a compilation of everything else her blog holds. In this section online viewers are able to see specific clothing pieces, beauty products, or home furnishings that Engel references complete with links to purchase the items.

Overall Style

The overall style of Julia Engel can best be described as feminine and classic. She wears simple pieces and not too many layers. Her wardrobe lacks flashy pieces or loud prints and consists of simpler polka dotted or floral patterns, and timeless pieces that can be restyled many different ways. Her outfits are often completed with colorful or unique accessories that add personality while keeping her overall feminine style intact. Engel says she draws style inspiration from things around her and this is shown on her Instagram page by the incorporation of her surroundings. Her inspirations add to the girly feel of her

page because they often consist of floral arrangements, dainty desserts, or quaint cafes. Her pictures of her surroundings also represent her personal style in the sense that she often posts photos of timeless beauty. Engel shares photographs of beautiful beaches, sidewalks lined by fall trees, or colorful evening skies that are naturally aesthetic and can be appreciated by anyone, much like her classic style. Her page does not change with trends or fads but instead stays true to her personal style and consistently provides followers with the glamour that can be found in her everyday life.

Defining Feature

The aspect of Engel's blog and Instagram feed that makes it stand out from other fashion or travel bloggers is the quality of her pictures. Her husband is a professional photographer and she credits him, or sometimes other photographers, to the majority of her pictures. The effort she puts into attaining high quality pictures is evident and plays a big part in drawing people into her blog. Everything she posts is visually appealing because of bright colors, clean settings, and high quality, so it is easy to understand why her followers want her posts showing up on their social media feeds day after day.

Caitlin Covington (@cmcoving) — *Southern Curls & Pearls*



Blogger History & Blog Origin

Caitlin Covington is the creator of a successful fashion blog entitled Southern Curls and Pearls. She is an avid social media user who has gained over 300,000 followers on Instagram alone. Her social media accounts often reference her blog which began in 2011. Covington started Southern Curls and Pearls during her junior year in college where she was studying Public Relations. After deciding she wanted a creative outlet to help share her love for fashion, beauty, health, and life in general, she created a blog where she began documenting her day-to-day life. Although not a full time job, Covington makes a profit off of her blog by partnering with affiliates. She earns commission off of certain products if followers purchase them through her site. Any sponsored posts are noted and Caitlin Covington assures her followers that opinions provided are always her own.

Blog Title & Social Media Handles

Covington was born and raised in South Carolina, went to college in the state, and then stayed and started a career. She prides herself on being a southern girl with southern style. To represent her personality, upbringing, and the sense of fashion she holds, the title of her blog refers to being a "southern girl." One of Covington's defining features is her beautiful hair. Her long locks are almost always styled in the same curls. Followers constantly comment and compliment her hair and ask for tips and tutorials to give insight onto her upkeep. Because of this well-known and adored characteristic, she references her curls in the blog's title as well. The title also alludes to pearls which, although not a staple piece of Covington's wardrobe, come with certain fashion connotations that do apply to

her. Her Instagram handle is a combination of her initials, and a shortened version of her last name. While her blog title is not referenced in this handle, it is referenced and linked in the small personal description section on her Instagram page.

Instagram Activity

The majority of Covington's Instagram photos are of the daily outfits she wears. She posts between one and three times a day, often multiple shots of the same outfit. Besides pictures of her clothes, Covington occasionally posts photos of specific pieces she wears or other posed items such as nail polishes, hair products, coffees, or makeup. The pictures of her outfits are always simple and have her as the clear focal point, often with blurred backgrounds. This tactic keeps the focus on what she is wearing and little else. She often uploads close ups of her outfits that focus on one specific piece such as a purse, scarf, or certain piece of jewelry. The other types of photos are neat and simple, highlighting things she uses displayed neatly and arranged on simple back drops.

Blog Offerings

On Southern Curls and Pearls Covington expands on her Instagram photos by including entire posts dedicated to the outfits that she wears. The majority of posts center around one outfit and include around ten photos of that outfit. The photos are taken from different angles and highlight the different pieces that together create the completed outfit. Her blog focuses on her most recent outfits by not providing the selection to pick through previews of posts and explore each as desired. Instead, the blog's homepage is a feed that includes every picture from every post and the only way to view old posts is to scroll back through all the ones that have happened since. Besides her outfit posts, Covington

occasionally provides hair or makeup tutorials, or a post that shows one picture of a variety of different outfits that can be worn for one occasion, like during the holiday season for example.

Overall Style

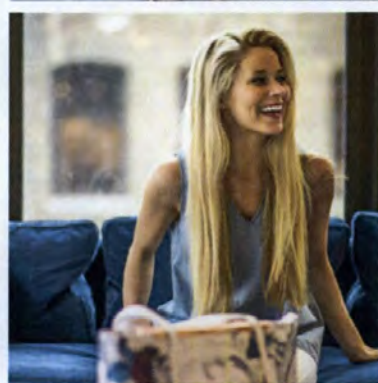
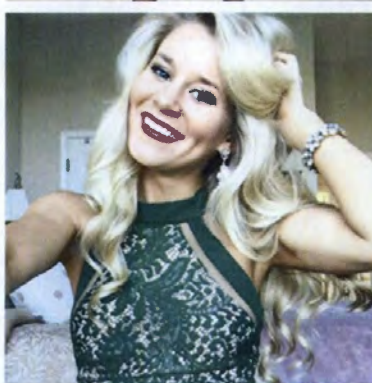
The overall style of Caitlin Covington is feminine and she makes a point of throwing trendy pieces into her wardrobe and pairing them with her staple pieces. She appeals to a wide variety of people because she stays up-to-date on trends and gives examples of how to wear fad pieces with timeless pieces that many people already have collected in their closets. Her outfits often include loud pieces, toned down by pairing them with solid prints and neutral colors. This style translates to her page and its overall look. It is full of whitespace and clean backgrounds, with focal points that can be clearly and easily determined.

Defining Feature

Caitlin Covington differentiates herself from other bloggers by her relatability. The pictures she posts that showcase her outfits are beautiful, but not all taken in scouted locations, rather in simple outdoors scenes, in front of plain buildings, or even in front of her own front door. She does not have a professional photographer that follows her around daily, so instead posts pictures that she sometimes just takes of herself using her cell phone and a mirror. Many bloggers post frequent pictures of exotic and luxurious vacations, Covington's page does no such thing. Covington references the same few makeup products she wears consistently, rather than referring to a different pricy lipstick with every post. Many of the accessories she owns, such as a specific bag or pair of sunglasses, show up

frequently with her different outfits, rather than one time and then not again until weeks or even months later. Many fashion bloggers pride themselves on their massive closets by rarely wearing the same thing repeatedly. Covington, however, wears the same staple pieces again and again and shows the ways she creates completely different outfits with the same things. Not only does she become relatable by this example, she also makes a point to appeal to more average class people by frequently highlighting pieces she bought for low prices. She often points out clothing pieces that are realistic purchases for someone on a budget. She also consistently posts pictures referring to previously worn outfits if a piece from the outfit goes on sale. These acknowledgements of thrifty shopping make Covington stand out in an online world full of fashion bloggers who make it seem as though money is no object. This characteristic makes her appealing and has played a big role in building her large and loyal follower base.

Olivia Rink (@oliviarink) — Olivia Rink



Blogger History & Blog Origin

Olivia Rink is the creator and content curator of a blog she named after herself. The blog was started in 2014 to help women solve the same problem Olivia Rink had dealt with throughout her life, dressing fashionably while accounting for her below average height. High fashion models have one specific body type and Rink, who measures at less than five feet tall, is far from fitting that typical mold. Olivia Rink was created to help spread styling advice and brands that accommodate to this specific need. Rink gains her expertise from her personal experience as well as her knowledgeable background. She graduated from the University of Kentucky with a degree in Fashion Merchandising, Apparel, and Textiles. By combining her passion, experience, and education, Olivia Rink has successfully created her blog that provides fashion and life advice to not only her original target audience, but now any followers who have fallen in love with what she offers. The blog transitioned from a hobby, to a part time job, and is now her full time career and source of income.

Blog Title & Social Media Handles

The name origin of her blog is easy to decipher. However, Olivia Rink has not always been the title. Originally Rink's blog was entitled "Lovely Little Style." This title hinted at her purpose of providing styling tips to short women. After she began to grow in popularity, Rink changed the name to add simplicity and avoid limiting herself. She wanted to consistently appeal to her original target market, and did not want the blog name to deter other potential followers, so she changed the name and added a personal aspect by naming it after herself. Across all platforms she now keeps the same brand image by titling everything with her own name so that she is always easy to identify. Each of her accounts is titled with her real name, Olivia Rink.

Instagram Activity

Olivia Rink's Instagram page mirrors her everyday life. She keeps the page personal by including pictures of her family and friends, while keeping up her blogger image by posting about outfits or items that she writes about on her blog. She posts between one and two times a day. Typically, there are two pictures posted referencing each blog post, and the other pictures on her page highlight what is going on in her life. Rink has a professional photographer who photographs for her blog and these same pictures are used on her Instagram so that she consistently has high quality content. Pictures of her outfits include accessories and close ups of specific pieces. Her other photos include scenery surrounding her, representations of her real life events, or references to her blog posts.

Blog Offerings

The Olivia Rink blog is growing quickly in its offerings and number of followers. What started as a small blog highlighting different outfits is now a lifestyle blog with a variety of types of content. The blog has an "about" page where Olivia explains who she is and why she started this outlet. There is also a contact page where followers can send in questions or comments. The actual content is split up into four categories. Followers can go to the "Outfit" section to admire outfits Rink puts together and find explanations of where the different pieces come from. There is also a "Beauty" section of the blog where followers can read reviews of different products and watch tutorials that explain how Rink does her daily hair and makeup. Another section, titled "Lifestyle," contains blog posts on décor & styling tips, travel advice, health & fitness, general inspiration, and advice and thoughts from Rink. This "Advice + Thoughts" area of her blog is the most personal because its content varies and details anything Rink feels like sharing. The final section is a "Shop"

section where viewers can find links to different items that are included in Rink's other posts, or similar items that she recommends.

Overall Style

Rink's personal style is sophisticated, feminine and trend oriented. She aims to reach a specific target market and her style and styling advice illustrates that. She wears clothes that adhere to both fashion and seasonal trends. Her winter posts are full of rich colors and layers while during the warmer months she dons lots of lace and floral prints. Her feminine persona is further exemplified in her posts by the focus on items in her life such as pink nail polishes, gold embellishments, and lots of pastel flowers.

Defining Feature

Olivia Rink wears trendy brands, has jealousy inducing hair, and consistently portrays the beauty she fills her life with. However, what makes her stand out as a fashion blogger is the personal touches she incorporates into her blog turned business. She is in her twenties and makes it clear that her life is not all perfectly in place. She sets trends and provides fashion advice, while also sharing aspects of her personal life and reminding viewers that her life is not always as photogenic as it may appear. Viewers of her page turn into avid followers because of her honesty and openness. Rink uses her blog in a journal-like manner by writing openly about situations that she is going through, whether that is navigating through friend's weddings, or working through her own heart wrenching break ups. She does not try to exemplify constant perfection; instead she often writes about how things sometimes go wrong and points out the positivity in those situations, which helps readers do the same in their own lives. She is so appealing to her fashionable, twenty-

something target market because she uses personal experience to connect with real women. She acts as more than just a fashion model, by taking on the role of a mentor who provides advice and guidance that can be incorporated into everyday life.

Overall Analysis Takeaways

Upon the examination of these bloggers, it is apparent to me that they employ tactics that are in some ways similar and in other ways different. The most outstanding trait I noticed among the successful fashion bloggers I studied was their passion for blogging and dedication to inspiring others through that passion. Backgrounds in fashion or marketing related fields undoubtedly helped in creating their personal brands and blog empires, but what makes their blogs shine is dedication to posting consistent content to satisfy their loyal and growing groups of followers.

The names of individual blogs need to meaningfully represent both what the blog portrays, and the blogger behind the page. The name should act as a synopsis of the personal brand and help provide a preview of what can be found on the blog. A key to creating a following is to use consistent names across all social media platforms so that social media consumers can easily decipher a certain blogger on any site.

I also noticed a direct correlation between number of social media platforms used and overall popularity of the blogger. This wide variety in channel use stems from bloggers' understanding the "need to respond to their communities across multiple channels, building advocates and viral shares in the process" (Doran). This sharing of the same content across different outlets allows bloggers to increase the reach and frequency of each post. The reach increases because they are not limiting themselves to the users of just one

social media outlet, but instead reaching users of all platforms. The frequency is beneficial as well because it makes sure loyal followers are exposed to the content multiple times, increasing their likelihood of becoming engaged.

Another commonality amongst successful bloggers is the high quality and consistency of the pictures and content they post. They post pictures daily, at a minimum, and more extensive content on their blogs multiple times a week. This is important because it gives followers a reason to keep coming back to the blog. Consistent content turns viewers into followers and creates loyalty. Successful blogs also contain high quality pictures. The bloggers I analyzed had a few photos taken with smartphones (most likely), however the majority of their content was taken by professional photographers or at the least, taken with professional cameras.

Fashion bloggers also grow in popularity by expanding their blog offerings. Throughout the relatively short duration of my research, some bloggers expanded the categories on their blogs greatly. The more content bloggers provide, the wider their potential target market becomes. Not only do these bloggers share content on their fashion, many also offer advice and opinions on beauty products, interior decorating tips, health and fitness guidelines, and little bits of inspiration they find throughout their lives. Strictly fashion blogs limit potential followers to those interested in strictly fashion, while these expansions make the blogs appealing to a wider audience.

Another noticeable shared quality is very strong personal brands. People are drawn to these blogs not solely because of the pictures, clothing pieces, or writing perfection, but because of the bloggers themselves. Bloggers offer something completely different than

traditional media because what they are doing, "is not journalism; it's talking about oneself. Which is to say, it's branding oneself" (Griffith). This characteristic of blogging helps bloggers connect with everyday people by simply portraying who they really are. The ability to portray that powerfully by creating a strong and consistent brand gives these bloggers a way to stand out, and a way to be recognized. In an industry so saturated by bloggers chronicling their everyday lives, strong brand images create differentiation. A key to becoming successful and popular within the blogging realm is to push and associate oneself with the same brand image in order to create value and recognition within consumer minds.

Red & Rae-diant

In order to apply my newfound knowledge in a practical and creative way, I underwent the task of creating a fashion blog as part of my thesis project. I created the blog on a Web design service called Weebly, and I utilized their free version.

I made a big decision upon starting the blog to use my sister, Raegan, as the model and face of the fashion blog. This decision was made based on a few different schools of thought. One reason for doing so was that I wanted to have full creative control of the blog. It was easier to style, pose, and photograph the pictures if I was the one behind the camera rather than the one in the photos. I chose to feature Raegan because I knew we could easily coordinate schedules and because of the uniqueness she provided in her look that I myself could not replicate. The fashion blogging world is so saturated that it is hard to differentiate one blogger from another. Raegan's long, red hair is much more attention grabbing than my more-average brown locks and this is another reason I chose her as the

blog's focal point. Another reason I made this decision was because at the beginning of the project I had a genuine interest in creating and continuing a personal fashion blog. When I initially started researching, I realized the immense amount of dedication required to create and upkeep a successful blog. I did not want to dedicate myself to this commitment in the middle of my busiest semester of college with a huge transition to the real world looming in my near future, so decided instead to put the idea off and use this project as a giant learning experience to one day apply to another blog. I wanted to see what worked and what did not and learn everything I could about what goes into running a blog, learn from mistakes made and opportunities missed, and keep that knowledge for later application. Although she is the one in all of the pictures, I wrote in first person as if she were the one writing to create a personal sense of voice. With her as the model I was able to act as sole creator, location scout, stylist, photographer, editor, and writer for the blog.

A great deal of time and brain storming went into the creation of the blog's name, Red & Rae-diant. I wanted to represent Raegan and the style that would be portrayed. I decided to base the name on one of Raegan's most outstanding characteristic that draws in attention, her red hair. This reference is where the "Red" came from. I further supported this reference because of the rarity of red hair, especially among fashion bloggers I looked at and analyzed. They were difficult to come across, and this characteristic is both something rare, and something that needs to be accounted for when making styling choices. Redheads have unique coloring that makes certain colors and shades more or less flattering. Raegan has always used her hair as an asset that adds to her look instead of restricting it, and I figured that that trait would help her appeal to a niche market that currently has few fashion blogger role models. The second part of the title was a

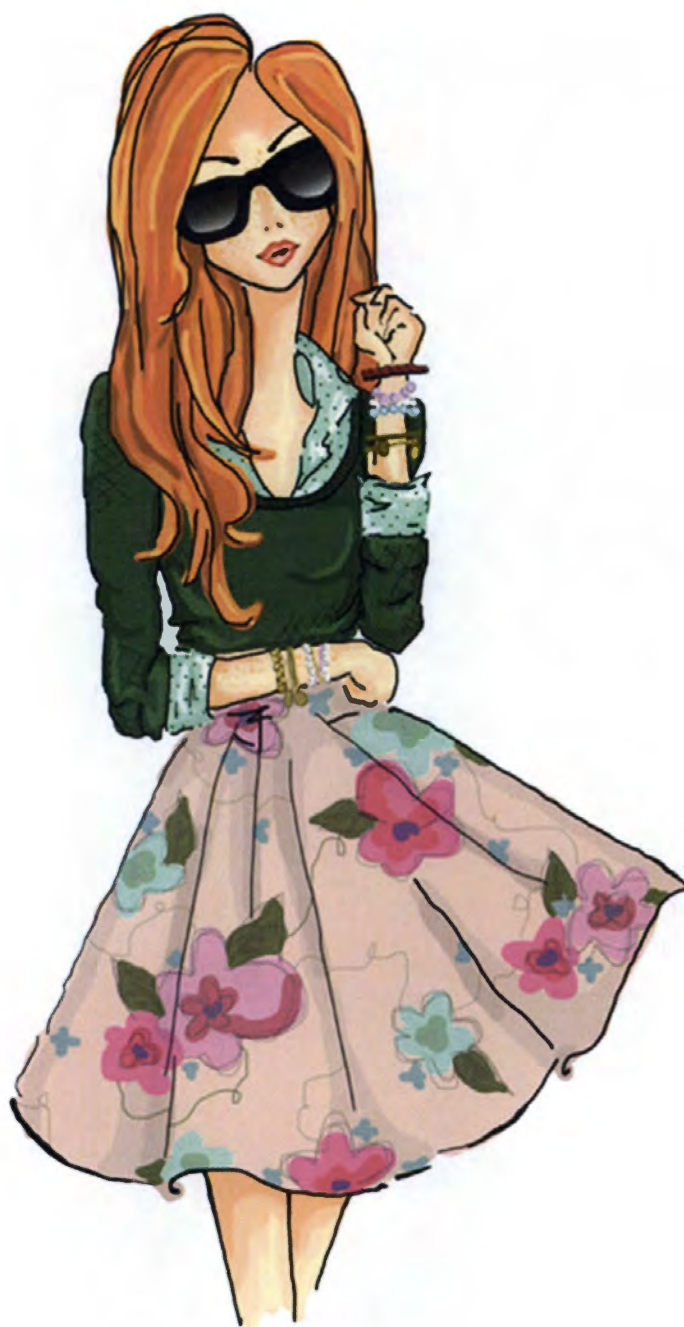
combination of her nickname, Rae, and the word radiant. Successful fashion bloggers inspire others because they are putting their own passions into everything they create. To be radiant is to shine or glow brightly, and I believe that people shine the brightest when they are doing something that they are passionate about. To exemplify the passion and genuine heart put into the creation of the blog, the reference to radiance was incorporated into the title.

I chose to create Red & Rae-diant as a blog dedicated strictly to fashion. This choice limited the content so I focused each post around a different outfit with only a short inclusion of words at the end of each post, a tactic adopted from Sarah Vickers. Each separate outfit was chronicled through a series of 10 to 15 pictures. The pictures show the same outfit, with focuses on different pieces or accessories from different angles. I also tried to incorporate Rae's personality in each separate shoot. The end of each post consisted of a few sentences written in first person, with details about where the outfits were worn, how and why they were put together, or where the different pieces being worn were from.

The overall style of the blog was a mix of trendy pieces, with preppy, classic touches, and girly-ness throughout. Outfits often consisted of pieces from local boutiques to represent a trendy style created through hometown retailers. The style represented is that of a busy college student with dedication to incorporating fashion into everyday life. There is a focus on accessories and the way they can easily complete or add intrigue to the normalcy of this target market's typical outfit. The posts focus on ways simple pieces can be worn in different ways, and be made cute by putting them together to create complete ensembles.

Changes to Implement

While creating and running this blog I made many mistakes. Looking back, there are many things I would have done differently. I took on the task of Red & Rae-diant's actual creation early on in the process with not enough content planned out. I excitedly started the blog and put out my first few posts, only to realize I did not have enough things planned in advance and quickly seemed to fall behind. A content calendar would have been a helpful tool to use throughout the duration of the project. If I revisit the idea of blogging, I would also invest in a paid for website that allowed for a unique domain that would make the blog easier to find for potential users. The use of multiple social media platforms would have also helped in drawing in followers and creating a stronger brand image.



red & Rae liant



Bringing in the New Year

I brought in 2016 my very favorite way, surrounded by family. My parents, sister, and our best friend who might as well be a second sister, and I celebrated with drinks and a delicious dinner while vacationing in our favorite little cozy Florida city. The night was nothing extravagant, but there's no way I would have rather spent my time! We laughed and reminisced on all the amazing things that happened in 2015 and aspired over what this New Year has the potential to bring. It was the perfect ending to one year, and the perfect start to the next!

I celebrated in one of my favorite festive shirts from T&J Designs. If you haven't browsed their site, do so now because it's full of clothes and accessories worthy of any celebration, and for a limited time they're all on sale in celebration of the New Year!



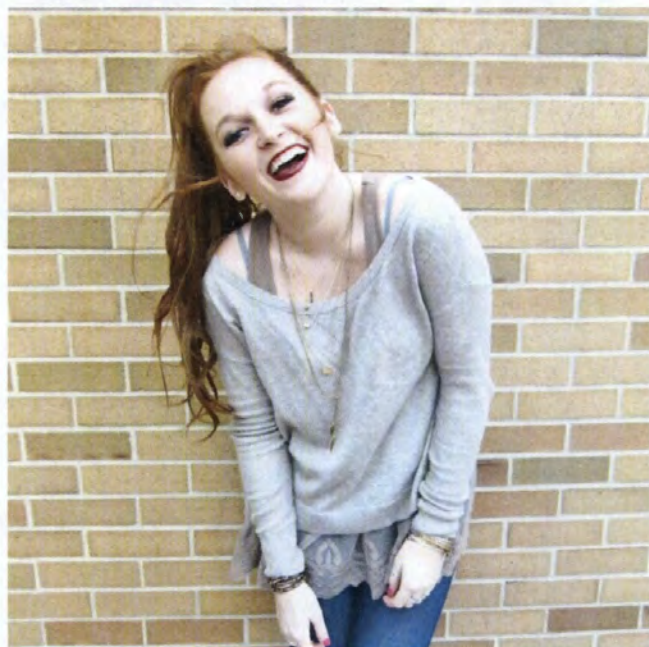


Sweater Weather

After the freezing weather Indiana has had for the past few weeks, I'm loving this little spike in the temperature!

There are few clothing pieces I love more than big cozy sweaters & blanket scarves. This scarf is just one that I picked up from Target, but it's so warm and cozy that it has become one of my favorite wardrobe pieces and go-to accessories all winter long.





Lots of Lace & Dainty Details

I have so many individual pieces of jewelry, clothes, or accessories that I especially love so one of my favorite things to do is figure out ways to wear them all at once! With different combinations, I try to give the same pieces completely different looks so that I get to wear them as often as I can. Today I tried to do just that by combining three of my favorite necklaces to create this layered look. I also got out one of my favorite summer lace hemmed tanks and put it under a sweater so that I don't have to wait until May to wear it again.



Friday Floral

Celebrating the fact that the groundhog saw his shadow earlier this week and predicted spring to come early. Even though the grass isn't especially green yet, and the plants here still look like winter, I'm incorporating a little spring into my day with this floral shirt from one of my favorite little boutiques, Dottie Couture!





Winter Wonderland

It's February and finally starting to look like winter! As much as I hate walking from class to class in the freezing cold, it's impossible to deny how beautiful campus looks covered in this fresh snow. I'm keeping warm with lots of layers over one of my favorite over-sized tops from Sugar Love Boutique and the most comfortable leggings I've ever worn from Dottie Couture! They're easy to dress up or wear with casual outfits, and the best part is, they keep me just as comfortable now as I was when I woke up this morning.





Perfect Pearls

How cute are the pearls on this sweater?! I love little embellishments like these because they make even the simplest of clothing pieces, like a plain black sweater, so much more fun.



Snow Time like Winter

As much as I complain about the Indiana snow, it's impossible not to admire how beautiful it makes the world. I'm keeping warm on my treks to class with lots of layers and these Steve Madden boots that have become my staple piece for the season.



A Little Plaid Perfection

Sharing this post because I found a new all-time favorite shirt! This flowy find is so comfortable and it's easy to dress up with jewelry (like this), or down with black leggings for a more casual feel. The plaid on the side adds a little color to any outfit and the soft material makes me dread the end of any day that I have to take it off.

Works Cited

Bilkova, Tereza. "Fashion Bloggers, the Perfect Example of Influencer Marketing Potential." *Thismoment Content Marketing Blog*. 12 Feb. 2015. Web. 09 May 2016.

Covington, Caitlin (cmcovin). Instagram.

Covington, Caitlin. *Southern Curls and Pearls*. 2015. Web.

Doran, Sophie. "Are Fashion Blogs Effective Marketing Tools for Luxury Brands?" *Luxury Society*. 06 May 2014. Web. 09 May 2016.

Engel, Julia. *Gal Meets Glam*. 2015. Web.

Engel, Julia. (juliaengel). Instagram.

Francois, Laurent. "Social Media: The Main Runway for Fashion Industry." *Social Media Today*. 06 Feb. 2012. Web. 09 May 2016.

Godso, MaKenzie. "The World of Fashion Blogging: A Trendy Career for a Trendy Industry." *LEGACY Magazine*. 04 Nov. 2015. Web. 09 May 2016.

Goldsmith, Katie. "Anna Wintour Discusses Fashion Bloggers, Irving Penn, and Hamish Bowles's Surfing Lesson." *The Cut*. 20 Apr. 2010. Web. 09 May 2016.

Griffith, Erin. "Bloggers Mean Business." *AdWeek*. 13 Sept. 2011. Web. 09 May 2016.

Jones, Sarah. "How Much Influence Do Fashion Bloggers Have?" *Luxury Daily RSS*. 26 Nov. 2014. Web. 09 May 2016

Raye, Amanda. "Fashion Blogging is Creating a New Era of Influencers." *The Next Web RSS*. 06 May 2012. Web. 09 May 2016

Rink, Olivia. (oliviaring) Instagram.

Rink, Olivia. *Olivia Rink*. 2015. Web.

Vickers, Sarah. *Classy Girls Wear Pearls*. 2015. Web.

Vickers, Sarah. (sarahkjp). Instagram.